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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the research on women in the outdoors, 1978-97. Among the major findings are the following: women were underrepresented and underpaid in executive and management positions related to outdoor programs; women tended to lead outdoor groups differently than men; outdoor recreation patterns differed in that women were more likely to seek out aesthetic experiences whereas males enjoyed the glory of exploring the unknown; little research has addressed diversity and women in the outdoors; all-female groups have demonstrated value related to the absence of traditional gender expectations; lack of confidence limited women's success more than did physical limitations; outdoor activities boosted self-esteem; the major constraints to finding meaning in the outdoors for women related to social dimensions; and outdoor activities had therapeutic benefits for women. The findings indicate that much of the research on girls and women is not framed as feminist or gender-based; research focused on gender differences has revealed little about the outdoor experience for females; research on women in the outdoors has contributed to a broader understanding of the epistemology and methodology used by researchers; studying girls and women may pave the way for addressing gendered meanings and other issues of diversity in the outdoors; research must emphasize critical analyses in addition to personal experience; and empowerment is emerging as an important theme that could benefit all outdoor educators. (Contains 58 references.) (TD)

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AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS

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INTRODUCTION

A 35-year old guidance counselor who had spent little time in the outdoors as a child made this statement after a two-week Woodswomen-sponsored canoe trip in Canada, "I miss being outside all day long, watching the sun rise and set everyday. I miss watching the clouds change shape from morning 'til night....I miss the fabulous Portage Queens (the name the group had given themselves)." Growing numbers of women are participating in outdoor activities. Historically the outdoors has been considered a male domain, but many women have participated regardless of the lack of support and social affirmation (Miranda, 1987). Bialeschki (1992) suggested that women have always been involved in outdoor activities but only recently have their numbers and experiences been documented.

Despite the evidence that women and girls are more visible in the outdoors, we still know little about their outdoor experience as evidenced by the relative dearth of empirical studies conducted. The literature on girls and women in sports, for example, increased in the past 15 years, but the subset of research on women and the outdoors grew more slowly. Considering the existing literature, however, it is useful to analyze where current research has taken us and the areas that require further focus. The purpose of this integrative review is to examine what the literature says about girls and women in the outdoors, review where gaps exist, and suggest some possible directions for the future.

Methods

Approaches including research on girls and women, feminist research, and gender-based research have contributed to the breadth and depth of understanding about women and the outdoors. In each approach, girls and women are placed in the center of analysis, but each has a slightly different focus. Research about women, for example, has made the involvement or lack of involvement of girls and women in the outdoors visible. Feminist research has had agendas leading to uncovering oppression and empowering women through outdoor involvement leading to individual and social change. Gender-based research, whether related to differences or the cultural connotations associated with one's biological sex, has resulted in broader analyses of the gendered meanings of this involvement (Henderson, 1994a; 1994b).

The intent of this integrative review was to examine approaches used in the existing literature about women and the outdoors, to determine the status of current research, and to suggest implications for the future. The following tasks constituted this integrative review: delimiting the research review questions, identifying the studies to be analyzed, presenting the findings from the studies,

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analyzing the findings, interpreting the results, and writing the review (Jackson, 1980).

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to conduct an integrative review of empirical research on girls and women in the outdoors over the past twenty years (1976-1996). Through initial ongoing work by Roberts (1997), we identified studies that met the following criteria: the topic addressed women or gender and the outdoors with a focus on adventure-based programs and recreation/education activities; addressed all ages of women; included North American and international studies written in English language; and appeared as refereed articles, empirical studies, dissertations and theses, or juried proceedings. Books and chapters in books were included if they were empirically based. The review questions were delimited to examine the topic of the research, the methodology used, data findings, and the additional questions raised by this research.

Results

We will discuss the results of the integrative review based on what we learned in the systematic analysis. These results are summarized in the conclusions section along with an identification of the issues associated with studying women and the outdoors that appear salient. These results are discussed related to evolutionary stages, leadership, and participation as the organizing themes for the analyses.

Evolutionary Stages

This integrative review was analyzed from several perspectives. First, we examined the literature based on evolutionary phases (Henderson, 1994a). Because the study of women, gender, and the outdoors has unfolded through different approaches, our analyses were based on a feminist phase theory that has assisted scholars in describing research on women (Tetreault, 1985). These phases were applied to existing research on girls and women in the outdoors. The major analyses encompassed the past twenty years because little research literature existed about women's outdoor experiences in the first phase where information and knowledge about women in the outdoors was invisible.

This acknowledgment of invisibility resulted in a second phase discussion of "women worthies" where scholars attempted to identify women who contributed historically to the outdoor movement. In this second phase, we have seen literature about famous women's climbing teams (both rock and mountaineering) and stories of women explorers, although most of these have not been documented like traditional research studies. These stories have been important and significant, but they have not defined the relationship of women to the outdoors that most everyday women address nor have they been useful in a broader social analyses.

A third phase of the literature focuses on gender differences in the outdoors with the male model of outdoor experience generally compared to female ways of being. Although these studies have made girls and women visible in the literature, they have not always helped understand the experience of women in new ways. In this stage, women tend to be compared to men rather than examining the experiences of female participants. The problem with this research is that the differences have become the conclusions, rather the starting point for understanding the experiences of either males or females in the outdoors. We describe several examples of the meaning of this research later in this paper (e.g., Ewert & Young, 1992; Johnston & Blahna, 1993; Klarich, 1995; Marsh, 1989). This stage of re-

search is useful but insufficient without considering further phases.

A fourth phase of evolution in this field, often occurring concomitantly and as a reaction to the gender differences phase, is research about the experiences of women. This aspect is called the feminist scholarship phase (e.g., Hardin, 1979; Henderson, Winn, & Roberts, 1996; Humberstone & Lynch, 1991; Mitten, 1994; Pirfman, 1988). These studies are useful particularly related to understanding the value of women as leaders and of all female groups.

The newest emerging phase related to understanding the interface of gender and inclusion and how they affect women's and men's involvement and behavior in the outdoors, (e.g., Fox, 1992; Loeffler, 1996; Roberts & Drogin, 1993). This phase examines not only gender but the intersection of issues such as race, class, ability, and sexual orientation. Researchers are moving into a greater understanding of gender and its meanings in the outdoors by acknowledging the great diversity that exists among women.

Among these phases, the two primary areas of content were leadership and participation in the outdoors. Both of these areas included aspects related to gender differences, feminist research (although not always stated as such), and gender and diversity. The context of women's participation in the outdoors was further analyzed related to personal, sociocultural, and therapeutic outcomes.

Leadership

Leadership in the outdoors, and the need for more visible leadership by women for a variety of reasons, has been evident in the outdoor literature of the past twenty years. Much of the literature about women's leadership in the outdoors has centered on gender differences. Jordan (1988), for example, found many individuals in Outward Bound courses were more likely to want a male leader. Most men responded to stereotyped needs while most women were interested in actual levels of competence rather than the sex of the leader. Loeffler (1996) documented that women generally were underrepresented in executive and management positions related to outdoor programs. They also had lower wages and more discrimination as they tried to work in powerful male networks. Other constraints to their leadership included low self-esteem, gender role socialization, and the absence of early outdoor experiences. Koesler (1994) examined leadership in the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and concluded that mentoring had the most influence on female leaders. Women may develop leadership skills and styles differently particularly related to their need for mentoring. Others (e.g., Bell, 1996; Holzworth, 1992; Loeffler, 1991; McClintock, 1996; Warren, 1993) described the responsibility of instructors as role models and the benefit of all-women groups.

Other researchers have examined what makes women effective as outdoor leaders. Lehmann (1991) found that effective leadership is possible when grounded in a coherent ethical framework. Mitten (1994) discussed the need for ethical considerations based on a different model for women and girls than for men and boys. This model for females included a focus on shared leadership and cooperation. One of the earliest studies in this area by Hardin (1979) explored how all members of a group might be empowered to be leaders. Similarly, Warren (1993) described the value of a feminist pedagogy that enabled all group members to assume their own level of leadership. Bell (1996) used a feminist consciousness to show how practice is affected in the outdoor

setting. The focus was on how leaders, preferred to be called facilitators or guides in this study, help participants get in touch with their own strength, determine what it means to be a woman, and locate a sense of self.

The predominant conclusion that emerged regarding leadership was that women tended to lead outdoor groups differently than men. A feminist philosophy that seeks to empower women and enhance integrity for all participants emerged as a useful framework for examining leadership in the outdoors. Unfortunately, many of the models of leadership were male experience based so the work on new models is only beginning. Particularly missing in the literature was the impact of leadership styles and explanations of why gender differences may exist. This research has also failed to take into account the models of leadership addressed in education and related fields that may be available for women (e.g., Henderson, 1996).

Participation

The second major area emerging as a category in the integrative review was the focus on girls and women's participation in outdoor activities. We divided this research area into four themes: gender differences, diversity issues, organizational structure, and the context of meanings of the outdoors for women.

Gender Differences

Differences were evident in some outdoor activities, although the problem with identifying differences was that often they were complicated by more than just one's biological sex. For example, Klarich (1995) concluded that differences in outdoor recreation patterns existed between women and men, but no difference was found in the amount of time spent outdoors. Bunnel and Vesely's (1985) study about caving found that women were less involved than men, and were more likely to go for aesthetics whereas males went for the glory of exploring the unknown. They also found that women were more social than men in their caving endeavors. On the other hand, Burrus-Bammel and Bammel (1990) examined camping behaviors and personality type and found that individuals identifying as stereotypically "feminine" were less likely to camp. Over 90% of the activities done while camping that Burrus-Bammel and Bammel included in their survey were the same for males and females. Females, however, were almost totally responsible for meals.

Diversity

Diversity was an emerging issue in the outdoors. Its meaning encompassed many aspects of difference. Mitten (1989) described issues of diversity and showed case examples of how people talking about these issues specifically related to sexual orientation and all-women groups. Roberts and Drogin (1993) described the lack of participation of African-American women in the outdoors and identified such potential factors as: historical oppression and racism, stereotyping by race and gender, lack of role models, insufficient exposure to activity options, limited accessibility to outdoor recreation areas, and oppressive economic conditions. In another study, Roberts and Drogin (1996) also found that the majority of women of color believed that they had not been socialized to participate in outdoor activities, often due to race. At this point, little other literature has addressed additional issues of diversity and women in the outdoors, although this area has been identified as important by a number of individuals (e.g., Fox, 1992; Henderson, 1994b; Henderson et al., 1996; Washington, 1988).

Group Organization

Literature about women's participation in the outdoors during the past twenty years has addressed aspects of the organization of groups related specifically to all women programs. Bean (1988) concluded that women in all-female groups react differently because when men are present, women allow men to take leadership roles and tend to defer decisions to them. Henderson and Bialeschki (1986) identified how individuals in the all-women groups they studied were happy to be free of traditional gender expectations. Holzwarth (1992) summarized literature about women only groups and found participants thought this type of setting was important because of gender-free expression, individual goal setting, flexible itinerary, supportive atmosphere, appropriate risk raking, shared decision making, cooperation not competition, women as role models, and fun as a priority. Similarly, Mitten (1992) described the values of women-only groups and feelings of empowerment. The justifications for all-women groups prevailed in the literature. Clearly research showed these gendered groups were valuable, although more remains to be explored regarding the dynamics within such groups.

Meanings of the Outdoors

The meanings of the outdoors for female participants have also been a topic undertaken by several researchers. We analyzed these "meanings" under the subthemes of personal, sociocultural, and therapeutic. These three areas were not without overlap but they give a sense of what we analyzed about women and involvement in the outdoors.

Personal. The personal meanings of the outdoors for women have been examined in a number of ways. Risk was one area. Bean (1988) studied risk recreation and found that those women who scored high on risk tended to participate in a variety of activities and portrayed a variety of traits. Blessing (1988) found that high risk women were curious, contemplative, individualistic, innovative, indifferent, disciplined, venturesome, self-assured, directed, and liberal. Campbell, Tyrrell, and Zingaro (1993) studied female paddlers and discovered they had higher thrill and adventure seeking (TAS) scores than other women, but not as high as male paddlers. Washington (1988) found that black women had lower scores on thrill and adventure scores, and disinhibition scores. The data seemed to suggest that most white women who participate in the outdoors were more open to the challenge of risk.

Related to risk, as it has personal meaning for women in the outdoors, was the aspect of fear. Ewert and Young (1992) studied college students before, during, and after an outdoor program. Social based fears (e.g., letting people down, not meeting others' expectations) were higher for all participants than physical fears. Females reported higher levels of anxiety, but for both males and females these anxieties changed as they participated. Ewert (1992) also found that gender differences existed before and immediately after the course. Females were more fearful. He concluded that perhaps females were no more fearful than males but they were able to admit their fears to a greater extent. Humberstone and Lynch (1991) discovered that elements of fear and lack of confidence inhibited success more than physical limitations or ability for both men and women. Exploring other elements of fear in the outdoors (e.g., fear of violence) has yet to be studied empirically.

Researchers frequently studied how the outdoors provides great opportu-

nities for self-esteem building, but these results were sometimes hard to measure. Many of the programs studied were too short to measure significant results, yet those that were investigated identified several dimensions of self-concept. For example, Finkenberg (1994) found that women involved in an adventure program scored higher on two of nine measures of self esteem and overall self concept than a control group. A sense of control over one's life may be associated with involvement in the outdoors as Henderson & Bialeschki (1987) uncovered in their study of an all women's camp. Choice was essential for these women as was being able to be like a child again. Parkhurst (1983) found that an Outward Bound experience resulted in perceived increases in self-confidence, initiative, maturity, and ability to mix with others. Further, Marsh (1989) discovered that people who participated in Outward Bound had an increase in stereotypical masculine personality traits for both males and females; increases were also greater in single sex groups of women.

In summary, most of the research about the personal meanings suggested that the outdoors is good for women and that participation in outdoor activities can build both self-confidence and self-concept. The problem with this conclusion is that we do not know exactly how those outcomes occur for women. Further, we have not always examined what dynamics must be present for growth to occur.

Social. Another area of meaning for women in the outdoors related to sociocultural dimensions. The individuals with whom one interacted in the outdoors provided meaning. For example, Groff (1989) found that outdoor adventure program experiences as a child most affected future involvement but also created a contradiction regarding the gendered nature of the outdoors. Girls had positive experiences in the outdoors but also learned that it was primarily a male domain.

Gender roles and sex typing were also dimensions of the social meanings of the outdoors. Rogers (1978) found few significant differences in perception of outdoor activities as reflecting "stereotyped traits." Climbing, however, was viewed twenty years ago as the only strictly male activity, and hunting and fishing were acknowledged as less appropriate for females. McClintock (1996) found many reasons why women want to participate in women-only groups. One issue, for instance, related specifically to the desire to escape the bounds and limits that sexism and gender roles have placed on women. Even when sexism appeared, most women would still rather be with others in the outdoors than by themselves. Further, Lenskyj (1995) was critical of the assumption that the outdoors is always a helpful metaphor. The outdoors may still invoke power issues where women are "kept in their place" through reflecting women's roles in society rather then empowering them.

The major issues of constraints to finding meaning in the outdoors for women related to social dimensions. For example, Hollenhorst (1988) found males and females thought rock climbing required a great deal of strength to be successful. Additionally, a barrier for women was lack of opportunities to try adventure activities. Skills and ability were not limitations as much as cultural stereotypes and misconceptions. Johnston and Blahna (1993) concluded that constraint factors for women in the outdoors included risk of injury, lack of skills, poor health, and lack of discipline. They also suggested that history of socialization constrained women more than current social roles.

Therapeutic. The therapeutic benefit of the outdoors for women is an area that has taken on great significance in the past 10 years. Therapeutic benefits ranged from dealing with stress on a daily basis to examining how the outdoors might be a major therapeutic milieu. Mitten (1986) suggested that women do not like to be under stress and that the outdoors might be a way to counteract the negative effects of stress. Additionally, survivors of violence have found great potential in the outdoors. Mitten and Dutton (1996) found that survivors of sexual abuse experience outdoor living by focusing on inclusivity and safety, self-assessment, and impact of natural elements. Pirfman (1988) confirmed that a three day wilderness course as an adunctive treatment for victims of rape resulted in a decrease in overall level of fear, fear of rape, and fear of failure. She concluded that the outdoors may be an effective "complementary" treatment. Similarly, Israel (1992) did a study of Outward Bound participants who were survivors of violence. Women perceived themselves as having an increase in self concept, a more positive appraisal of their problem-solving abilities, and greater expectations that powerful others would not have an effect on them after their trip.

Roberts (1995) explained how wilderness therapy may be beneficial for women in general, but ethnic minorities who are often less comfortable with the outdoors, might need nurturing. Women of color may not seek an educational opportunity to find energy and healing in the wilderness when traditionally the outdoors has signified a foreign concept to them. Outdoor researchers are just beginning to address the issues of women of color and the benefits of wilderness therapy for all women. Clearly more empirical research is needed in this area. Nevertheless, the results gained so far are compelling regarding the value of the outdoors in some settings for addressing therapeutic processes for women.

Conclusions

The purpose of this integrative review was to examine the current state of research on women in the outdoors and to build upon the body of knowledge so that researchers, educators, and practitioners can understand people's experiences in the outdoors better. In the infancy of research on women and the outdoors, we may be raising more questions than we are answering. We believe this position of raising questions is where we need to be if we are going to set an agenda for future research. We observed an ever emerging body of questions to keep in mind as we pursue scholarly work. In this conclusions section, we summarize some of the results and offer further questions to consider in conducting ongoing research on women and the outdoors.

The first conclusion relates to the approaches used in doing this research. Much of the research done on girls and women is not framed as feminist or gender-based. Perhaps the assumption exists that all research on women is feminist, but this assumption may not always be true. Those individuals (e.g., Bell, 1996; Warren & Reingold, 1996) who have specifically used a feminist framework have been explicit in its value. For example, Bell (1996) contended that leadership and feminism could productively be explored as sets of varied practices. Future research that uses an explicit feminist framework may provide a stronger foundation for understanding not only research on women in the outdoors but also the broader cultural aspects that can lead to an understanding of gender and diversity.

A second conclusion is gender differences as conclusions for research tell us little about the outdoor experience for

girls and women. We struggle with the question of what difference "difference" makes and how much difference must exist before meaningfulness can occur. We found evidence that female leadership styles are often different from male leadership. Although researching gender differences gives some clues regarding how outdoor experiences may be different based on biological sex, we must be careful not to essentialize those differences and suggest that all women or all men experience the outdoors in the same way. We also must examine the underlying socio-historical dimensions to explain differences such as the likelihood that many women encounter dissimilar acculturation than most men. Women often bring different values and expectations into outdoor activities. Researchers in other fields of study have also concluded that women are not one homogeneous, socially undifferentiated class (e.g. hooks, 1994; Scraton, 1994; Tetreault, 1985). If we analyze gender differences as the starting point and not the conclusion of our research, we understand more about the meanings of the results. The key is in determining if and how these dissimilarities are problematic whether related to leadership or to participation. Further, differences between men and women may not be as dramatic as the diversity that exists among women. Regardless of how differences are manifested, they are complicated and can become easily misunderstood whether leadership or participation is being discussed.

Research on girls and women in the outdoors has contributed to a broader understanding of the epistemology and methodology used by researchers. Dustin (1992), for example, questioned the wisdom of the patriarchal view underlying social science. He provided a foundation for using feminist research as a way to challenge the world view, the separation of humankind from nature, and the objectivity of science. Feminist perspectives on women's outdoor experiences offer a way to expand the methodological paradigm in which the research occurs. Most researchers studying women and gender recognize that no singular research method exists (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992). Varied methods help understand the meanings of the outdoors in the lives of women and men. Fox (1992) indicated that properly designed quantitative research need not distort women's experiences and Henderson and Bialeschki (1992) suggested that quantitative approaches are useful when the interpretations are grounded in theory and efforts are made to uncover the meanings of the results. Although interpretive research is not the domain of only feminists, it has offered a useful way to understand the social construction of women's lives (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1992; Reinharz, 1992). The acknowledgment that many methods are useful, regardless of whether we collect qualitative or quantitative data, has provided new techniques for research in the outdoors regarding both women and men.

Studying girls and women may pave the way for addressing gendered meanings and other issues of diversity in the outdoors. For example, perhaps some of the successful emerging leadership patterns involving feminism (e.g., Henderson, 1996; Warren, 1993) may be applicable to men. Further, outdoor researchers studying women have the potential to reevaluate existing theory by pointing out the diversity and the contradictions inherent in understanding the outdoor experience. Examining the outdoor experiences of girls and women can make an empirical contribution by problematizing the outdoors, exploring how women experience the outdoors, and articulating how women resist and struggle to define their own outdoor spaces and experiences (Scraton, 1994). Although different femi-

nists have varying agendas, the purpose of most research about women in the outdoors has not been to negate contemporary research, but to enhance our interpretations of outdoor meanings. Where appropriate, the discovery of new ideas and analyses may make old interpretations obsolete. Those new interpretations, however, should have implications for broader, not narrower, theory. Any analysis is incomplete without progressing to the next step of discovering new approaches to correct past misconceptions. If research about the outdoors is to be useful today and in the future, we cannot lose sight of the economic, social, political, and physical reality of the individuals we are studying. Simply to critique does little good in extending knowledge unless we are ready to incorporate additional suggestions for social change. In using research about women as a corrective device, researchers can challenge the universalizing tendencies in the writing of both white, middle-class feminists (hooks, 1989) as well as white men. Race is an obvious omission as are class differences regarding women's involvement in the outdoors. Lesbians point out heterosexual assumptions in research and practice, and women with disabilities suggest that normative models do not always work (Fine & Asch, 1988). Acknowledging the need for understanding diversity, however, does not compensate for exclusion in writing or research. Research studies must be designed to provide data to explain the experiences of underrepresented populations in the outdoors.

A strength and yet a weakness of the literature about girls and women in the outdoors is that some individuals have written from a purely personal perspective. Although this approach is helpful, a need exists to find more outlets for research that emphasizes critical analyses in addition to personal experience. This reflexivity, that feminist researchers have embraced, has allowed outdoor researchers to move beyond trying to find a single answer, to explaining a range of possibilities that may work for different people. The field of outdoor education is in need of more and better research outlets, and this dearth of empirical outlets is creating a breakdown in the development of theory. Further, some of this literature is not easy to access so we have not been able to build upon previous research in ways that would be useful for theory development and testing. Better communication links among professionals will need to be established. Research on girls and women needs to be mainstreamed along with all other topics in the area of outdoor research.

Empowerment is emerging as an important theme that all outdoor educators may benefit from using. We are not suggesting that empowerment through the outdoors has not been an outcome for people over the years. The issue of empowerment, however, has been taken for granted rather than articulated in a way that could create social change not only for women, but for all people. More specifically, issues of empowerment are leading to questions about how to address emerging issues such as body image, ethics from a feminist perspective, measuring aspects of fear, participation patterns and cultural experiences based on ethnicity, and career development. The potential of the outdoors to function as a challenge to traditional female roles is serving as a part of empowerment and transformative change. This empowerment relates to individual empowerment as well as addressing social issues. Old theories of oppression, with the differences theorized between categories of women and men, have not moved the social change agenda forward in a way that is necessary if the outdoors is to be empowering for all people.

The research on girls and women in the outdoors is emerging but it continues to be an area teeming with possibilities. It is useful from time to time to take stock of where we are and where we want to go with this literature. This integrative review and its interpretive conclusions provide an initial attempt to discern what our research means. The need to understand women's involvement in the outdoors is no longer questioned as a significant component, but has become an integral part of exploring the human dimensions of the outdoors.

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